

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) will provide \$400,000 to support a "Center of Excellence" at Tribhuvan University's Institute of Forestry (IOF) in partnership with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VA Tech).

The Center, which will be named in honor of those who lost their lives in the September 23, 2006 helicopter crash, will provide quality training in conservation and prepare future generations of environmental leaders in Nepal.

Many of Nepal's leading environmentalists perished in a tragic helicopter crash in the Kanchenjunga region on September 23, 2006, representing a dramatic loss to the country's conservation community. Among the twenty-four who were lost were many distinguished Government of Nepal officials, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) experts and diplomats. Ms. Margret Alexander, USAID Deputy Director, and Dr. Bijan Acharya, USAID Program Specialist were also on board.

USAID/Nepal envisions that the Center will strengthen the capacity of IOF to educate leading researchers, faculty and professionals in forestry and natural resource conservation. Special emphasis will be placed on mentoring women and scholarship students from underserved communities identified under a WWF program in order to help them better integrate into IOF.

The Center is expected to attract world-class international faculty to Pokhara to collaborate on teaching and applied research. Opportunities to benefit from professional exchanges and mentoring activities will be greatly enhanced through Tribhuvan University's relationship with VA Tech University in the US.

USAID is also contributing \$150,000 towards a micro-hydro power project in Ghunsa, near the site of the accident which will provide electricity to nearly 80 households and serve as a memorial. For 55 years, USAID/Nepal has provided assistance to the people of Nepal in the areas of peace building, democracy and governance, health and family planning, economic growth, and humanitarian aid. The US Government will provide more than \$70 million in foreign assistance to the people of Nepal this year.